Analysis of job stress during the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher performance

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic that hit Indonesia caused many people to feel excessively anxious and fearful of uncertainty, impacting their work productivity. Individuals experienced behavioral, physical, and psychological symptoms such as headaches, difficulty sleeping, and other physical disorders, which are indicative of stress. While stress does not always have a negative meaning, excessive stress had an effect on work concentration. Work stress resulted in delays in work, decreased ability to carry out tasks, and even reduced performance. This research utilized quantitative methods, including questionnaires, interviews, and observations of teachers in Bilah Hulu District, Labuhan Batu Regency. Hypothesis testing was conducted using SEM analysis at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$) with 17 research respondents. The results of the study showed that work stress had a negative and insignificant effect on teacher performance, indicating that higher stress levels among teachers reduced their performance, albeit weakly in this study. The results also indicated that physical symptoms were the primary indicator of the work stress construct, while the quality of working conditions best described good teacher performance.

Keywords: Job stress, teacher performance, COVID-19 pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects across multiple aspects of human life in Indonesia (Candra et al., 2021; Alrasyid et al., 2023). It has disrupted the economy, strained healthcare systems, transformed educational practices, and altered social interactions (Loceng et al., 2023; Basmantra et al., 2023). To combat the virus, the Indonesian government has implemented stringent health protocols, such as regular handwashing, wearing masks in public spaces, maintaining physical distance, and restricting mobility. These measures were intended to curb the spread of COVID-19. However, over time, some segments of the population have grown weary of these precautions, leading to what is known as pandemic fatigue. This phenomenon describes a decline in motivation to adhere to health protocols due to prolonged exposure to restrictions and misinformation, which

has contributed to fluctuations in case numbers and increased public anxiety.

Data from the COVID-19 Handling Task Force reveals concerning trends in mortality rates throughout 2020 (Yuniasih et al., 2022). For instance, in March 2020, the death rate was 4.89%, which rose to 8.64% in April before decreasing in subsequent months (The Jakarta Post, 2020). This fluctuation underscores the challenges in managing the pandemic and highlights the consequences of inconsistent adherence to health guidelines.

Robbins in Lie and Siagian (2018) posits that job performance is determined by the quality and quantity of work an employee accomplishes within their assigned responsibilities. Effectiveness, as a measure, involves optimizing organizational resources (such as energy, finances, technology, and materials) to maximize productivity and achieve desired outcomes.

The government's response to the pandemic necessitated sweeping policy changes, including the implementation of social restrictions. These measures prompted widespread adoption of Work from Home (WFH) arrangements, self-quarantine protocols, localized lockdowns, and restrictions on communal activities. Consequently, there has been a notable shift in daily routines, social interactions, and leisure activities, with a marked increase in digital communication and reliance on technology (Adhiarso et al., 2018; Amelia and Balqis, 2023). This shift, from physical to virtual interactions, has introduced new stressors and challenges, impacting overall well-being and work effectiveness (Zoonen & Sivunen, 2021; Xu, 2023; Harunavamwe & Kanengoni, 2023).
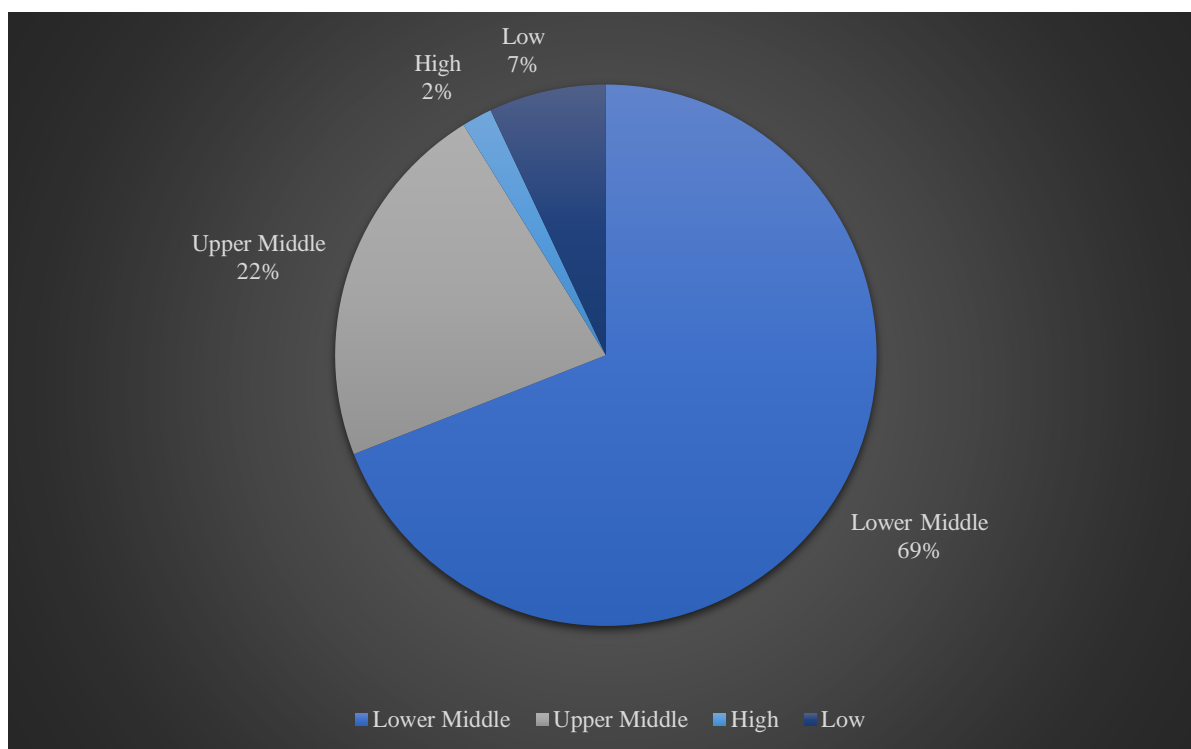

FIGURE 1. Distribution of Indonesia's population by year income class 2021 (BPS, 2021)

One of the challenges in educational development as discussed in the 2020-2024 RPJMN narrative is the industrial revolution 4.0. The increasing development of digital technology can be utilized to help the development process in the education sector, namely through distance learning. This is very necessary considering the COVID-19 pandemic that has occurred globally, including in Indonesia, which has occurred since early March 2020 (BPS, 2020). One of the challenges faced by teachers is the gap between the lower middle-income population group and the upper middle or high-income population group regarding access to education and the use of technology and the internet. This makes it difficult for some students to use technological devices to assist learning activities (Big Data BPS, 2023).

Numerous studies have examined the impact of work-related stress during the pandemic. Yuwono's research (2020) identifies changes in lifestyle and daily routines as triggers for heightened anxiety. Sahputri (2021) discusses the pervasive stress experienced by individuals during the COVID-19 crisis, impacting their mental health and overall well-being. Muslim's study (2020) suggests that while stress can negatively affect performance, it can also serve as a motivator under certain conditions. Conversely, Retnowati et al. (2020) found that work stress did not significantly impair performance in their research, reflecting varying outcomes across different contexts. Shabuur and Mangundjaya (2020) examined the stress associated with remote work arrangements, while

Aufar and Raharjo (2020) explored strategies for managing pandemic-induced stress through relaxation techniques.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Employee Performance

According to Robbins (2006), employee performance serves as a measure of the outcomes expected from an employee's role within an organization. It encompasses the achievement of tasks and responsibilities in alignment with the standards set by the company or organization. Lie and Siagian (2018) further elaborate on this, defining employee performance across five key indicators:

1. **Quality**: This indicator evaluates the excellence of work produced, reflecting the employee's skills and the precision with which tasks are completed.
2. **Quantity**: Quantity measures the volume of output generated, often quantified by the number of units produced or activity cycles completed within a given timeframe.
3. **Timeliness**: Timeliness assesses the punctuality and efficiency with which tasks are completed, ensuring they are finished within designated timeframes while optimizing available time for other activities.
4. **Effectiveness**: Effectiveness gauges the efficient utilization of organizational resources—such as energy, finances, technology, and raw materials—to maximize productivity and achieve desired outcomes.
5. **Independence**: Independence refers to the level of autonomy and self-reliance exhibited by employees in fulfilling their work commitments. It denotes the ability to carry out assigned tasks responsibly and effectively without constant supervision.

These indicators collectively provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating and understanding employee performance within the organizational context. They highlight not only the output and efficiency of tasks performed but also the quality, timeliness, and resource management skills that contribute to overall effectiveness in achieving organizational goals.

Job Stress

Chaplin (1989) defines work stress as a response to both physical and psychological stressors, which can disrupt an individual's ability to perform tasks and threaten their well-being. This stress arises from the interaction between stressors in the work environment and an individual's coping abilities, determining whether the response is positive—boosting morale—or negative—indicating distress. In practical terms, stress is commonly associated with negative impacts (Sari et al., 2024).

Sahputri (2021) elaborates on stress theory through three models: the stress stimulus model, the stress response model, and the transactional model of stress. The stress stimulus model focuses on direct stimuli without initial evaluation, categorizing stressors into life events requiring immediate adaptation, chronic tension necessitating long-term adjustment, and daily hassles necessitating minor, short-term adjustments. The stress response model suggests stress results from an individual's reaction to stimuli, where encountering a threatening situation triggers a stress response. The transactional model emphasizes an individual's assessment of stressors, influencing their subsequent response.

According to Robbins in Robin and Hoki (2018), the consequences of stress manifest in physiological, psychological, and behavioral symptoms. Physiologically, stress can alter metabolism, induce headaches, and increase the risk of heart problems. Psychological symptoms include job dissatisfaction, tension, irritability, anxiety, and procrastination tendencies. Behavioral symptoms manifest as changes in productivity, increased absenteeism, turnover rates, altered eating habits, and disrupted sleep patterns.

Recent studies have explored the impact of work stress on teacher performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fauzan et al. (2022) found that teachers experienced moderate to high levels of work stress during this period. Nurianti et al. (2023) demonstrated a significant negative effect of work stress on teacher performance. Conversely, Mukaromah (2022) reported a weak negative correlation between work stress and teacher performance.

METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive research approach aimed at elucidating a specific research situation, supported by a comprehensive literature review to bolster the researcher's analytical framework and conclusions. The research employed a survey methodology to examine the characteristics and causal relationships between variables of teacher performance and work stress, without any intervention by the researcher.

The study focused on a population of 17 teachers located in Bilah Hulu District, Labuhan Batu Regency, North Sumatra Province. Sampling was conducted using a cluster sampling technique based on geographical areas. Data collection was facilitated through online surveys administered via Google Forms.

For data analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques were utilized with the SMART PLS tool. SEM analysis enables a detailed exploration of relationships between variables, validating theoretical constructs and providing insights into the impact of work stress on teacher performance within the study context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Analysis of Descriptive Statistics Results

The research respondents consisted predominantly of female teachers (82.4%) and male teachers (17.6%). Most respondents held a bachelor's degree, followed by those with a master's degree, while some had completed only high school. In terms of tenure, approximately 53% of respondents had less than 5 years of teaching experience, with the remaining 47% having more than 5 years of experience.

Analysis of SEM Results

Result of Outer Loading of the Manifest Variable

The table presents the outer loading values for the manifest variables under the constructs of Teacher Performance and Work Stress. Outer loading values indicate the strength of the relationship between each manifest variable and its underlying construct. Higher values signify a stronger association between the variable and the construct it represents, suggesting significant contributions to the measurement of Teacher Performance or Work Stress.

TABLE 1. Result of Outer Loading of the Manifest Variable

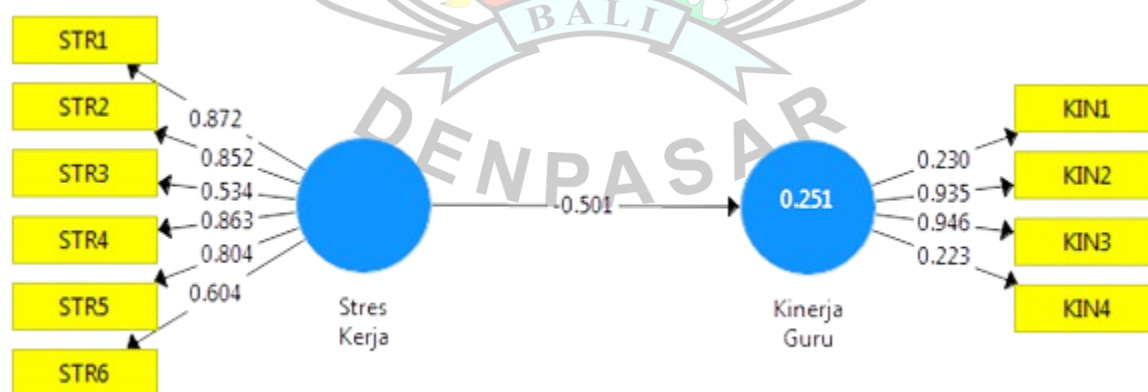|	Teacher Performance	Work Stress
KIN1	0.230	
KIN2	0.935	
KIN3	0.946	
KIN4	0.223	
STR1		0.872
STR2		0.852
STR3		0.534
STR4		0.863
STR5		0.804
STR6		0.604

FIGURE 2. Results of the PLS SEM diagram

Figure 2 above is the research model before modifications were made.

Statement of Validity Testing of each Manifest Variable

The table categorizes the validity of each manifest variable under the construct of Teacher Performance:

- Variables labeled as "Valid" indicate those that successfully contribute to measuring Teacher Performance within the study, showing significant relationships with the construct.
- Variables labeled as "No Valid" suggest they may not effectively measure Teacher Performance based on the study's criteria or data analysis.

TABLE 2. Statement of Validity Testing of each Manifest Variable

	Teacher Performance
KIN1	No Valid
KIN2	Valid
KIN3	Valid
KIN4	No Valid
STR1	Valid
STR2	Valid
STR3	No Valid
STR4	Valid
STR5	Valid
STR6	Valid

FIGURE 3. Results of the PLS SEM diagram
Figure 3 above is the research model after modification

Result of Outer Loading of the Manifest Variable
The table displays the outer loading values and corresponding p-values for the manifest variables in relation to their constructs.

TABLE 3. Result of Outer Loading of the Manifest Variable

	Original Sample	P Values
KIN2 ← Teacher Performance	0.930	0.000
KIN3 ← Teacher Performance	0.954	0.000
STR1 ← Work Stress	0.882	0.000
STR2 ← Work Stress	0.864	0.000
STR4 ← Work Stress	0.858	0.000
STR5 ← Work Stress	0.793	0.000
STR6 ← Work Stress	0.582 (approaching)	0.000

The results show that variables KIN2, KIN3 (under Teacher Performance), and STR1, STR2, STR4, STR5, and STR6 (under Work Stress) exhibit strong associations with their respective constructs, as evidenced by their high outer loading values and significant p-values.

Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted
The table presents measures of composite reliability (Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A) and average variance extracted (AVE) for the constructs of Teacher Performance and Work Stress.

TABLE 4. Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Statement
Teacher Performance	0.875	0.901	0.941	0.888	Reliable
Work Stress	0.864	0.920	0.901	0.650	Reliable

The results indicate that both constructs, Teacher Performance and Work Stress, demonstrate high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha and rho_A) and composite reliability, as well as satisfactory average variance extracted. These findings support the reliability and validity of the measurement model used in the study.
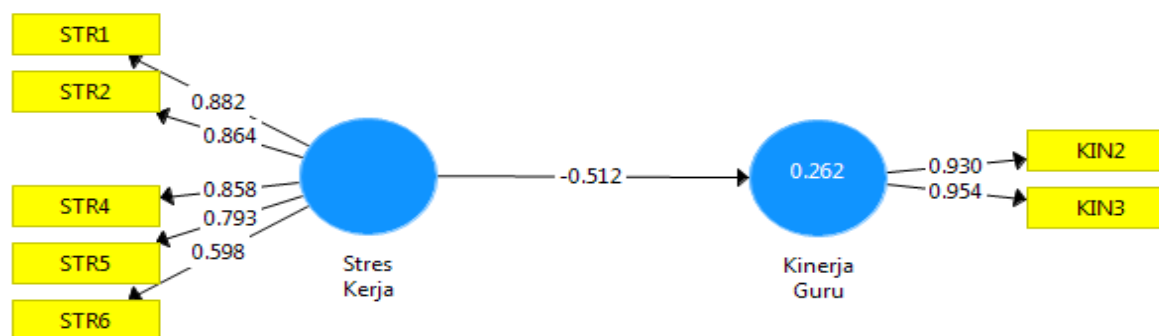

FIGURE 4. Results of the PLS SEM diagram

R-Square
The table presents the coefficient of determination (R-square) for the variable Teacher Performance.

TABLE 5. R-Square

Variable	R-square
Teacher Performance	0.262

The R-square value of 0.262 for Teacher Performance suggests that approximately 26.2% of the variability in teacher performance can be explained by the independent variables included in the study. This statistic provides insight into the predictive power of the model regarding teacher performance based on the factors examined.

Large Influence of Variables
The table displays the regression coefficient and corresponding p-value for the relationship between Work Stress and Teacher Performance.

TABLE 6. Large Influence of Variables

	Original Sample	P-Values
Work Stress → Teacher Performance	-0.512	0.127

The result (-0.512) suggests a negative relationship between Work Stress and Teacher Performance, although it is not statistically significant based on the p-value of 0.127. This means that the observed relationship could have occurred by chance and may not be a reliable indicator in the population.

Discussion
Hypothesis 1: Job stress has a negative and insignificant effect on teacher performance

The results of the research show that work stress has a negative and insignificant effect on teacher performance, which means that the higher the stress experienced by teachers can reduce teacher performance, only in this study the effect is weak. This can not only be seen from the magnitude of the influence between the two variables, namely -0.512 (p-values = 0.000<0.05) but can be seen from each factor loading value on each indicator of the work stress variable that meets the specified criteria. So the measurement equation model for the work stress variable obtained in this research is:

STR 1= 0.882 Work Stress + $\alpha 1$ obtained p values <0.05 (physical symptoms)
STR 2= 0.864 Work Stress + $\alpha 2$ obtained p values <0.05 (physical symptoms)
STR 4= 0. Work Stress + $\alpha 4$ obtained p values <0.05 (physical symptoms)
STR 5= 0.793 Work Stress + $\alpha 5$ obtained p values <0.05 (physical symptoms)
STR 6= 0.598 Work Stress + $\alpha 6$ obtained p values <0.05 (physical symptoms)

The explanation of each measurement shows that each indicator between constructs is significant. The results of the equation model can be seen that the first equation is the one with the largest factor loading value, namely 0.882. This means that the condition of physical symptoms is the biggest description of the construct of work

stress. Followed by the second work stress equation which has a factor loading value of 0.864. That is why special attention is needed from organizational management to better accommodate the physical symptoms of teachers because it has been proven to have an insignificant effect on work stress.

These results are supported by research by Robin and Hoki, (2018) which shows that stress has a negative and insignificant effect on employee performance. Where every individual in carrying out daily activities and work is never free from stress. Teachers in Aek Nabara City respond to negative work stress because the source of work stress comes from learning methods that have changed to an online system. Where previously teachers were used to the offline teaching system.

Judging from the first stress statement, namely "I have a headache because of the confusing online teaching job," which represents an indicator of physical symptoms, it shows that teachers face big challenges in teaching because in conditions like these teachers are required to be able to manage and design learning media (online media) in such a way as to be effective. to achieve learning objectives and to prevent or anticipate student boredom in online learning models. However, teachers were able to overcome this and finally got used to learning online during the pandemic. This is what makes the effect insignificant because the source of stress can be managed and overcome well. Plus, the presence of students can trigger stress because they don't do assignments and tests.

However, there are personality characteristic factors that can influence a person's stress level, as stated by Lumbanraja (2018) general emotional stability, personality fortitude, locus of control, immunity and resilience can help a person overcome the stress they experience. Teachers are unsung heroes and pioneers in the world of education. They must be accustomed to dealing with the different characteristics of each student every day. Teachers must be patient in educating if students are noisy in class and do not obey the rules.

However, not all students do this. Some students are motivated to study, do their assignments well, and help the teacher to tell other students to obey the rules in class and at school. In addition, there are factors of level of ability, knowledge, education, skills, and a sense of professionalism oriented toward community service which can be a good interaction between teachers and students (Lumbanraja, 2018).

This is in accordance with Chaplin's statement which states that if the response is positive, then the source of stress is actually a boost to employee morale, while a negative response is an indicator that the source of stress is a stressor. Negative stress has a strong effect if the stress experienced exceeds a person's capacity. Which can reduce a person's performance. From the descriptive results, it was found that the number of respondents were female (82.4%) and workers were male (17.6%). Female respondents tend to get stressed more easily than male respondents. However, because the educational background of the teachers has a bachelor's degree, this source of stress can be managed well.

Judging from the third stress statement, namely "I worry if there are mistakes when teaching" which represents an indicator of psychological symptoms, it shows that this indicator does not build the construct of work stress experienced by teachers. This is because the results of the characteristics of respondents based on length of work under 5 years are around 53% and the remaining work for more than 5 years is around 47 percent. Where there are no teachers who have worked for less than one year. This shows that teachers are used to teaching well at school. It's just that the teaching system has changed to online. The topic that will be conveyed to children has been mastered by the teacher well.

The measurement equation model for the teacher performance variable obtained in this research is:

KIN2= 0.930 Kinerja Guru + γ1 diperoleh p values <0.05 (Kualitas)
KIN3= 0.954 Kinerja Guru + γ2 diperoleh p values <0.05 (Kuantitas)

By explaining each measurement equation, it shows that each indicator between constructs is significant. The results of the equation model can be seen that the second equation is the one that has the largest factor loading value, namely 0.954. This means that the quantity of work condition is the one that best describes the good performance conditions for teachers in Aek Nabara City.

The COVID-19 pandemic conditions cause high stress for teachers and tend to lead to burnout because of the completely digital work environment and online learning (Anita et al., 2021). Several influencing factors mean that almost the majority of teachers do not understand the applications used in teaching, as well as distance which causes teachers to face obstacles in interacting with students optimally. Bilah Hulu District is in the yellow zone, which requires distancing between teachers and students to anticipate transmission. So, the learning process can only be done online via social media, namely the Whatsapp group. The obstacles that occur during online learning in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic are not only experienced by students. Teachers can also experience problems in the form of internet signals, difficulties in operating devices, and so on. However, if problems occur on the part of the students, such as devices that are not compatible and the internet signal is not good, it can hinder the teacher's work so that completion can exceed the specified time because they have to wait for the students to submit assignments to them, equalize the learning material so that it is delivered evenly to all students. , and others (Tripambudi et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted various aspects of life, including the economic, health, educational, and social sectors in Indonesia. Despite government efforts to enforce health protocols, the fluctuating number of cases and the emergence of pandemic fatigue have resulted in ongoing challenges. This study aimed to explore the impact of work stress on teacher performance during the pandemic, using a quantitative descriptive research approach.

The research, conducted among 17 teachers in Bilah Hulu District, Labuhan Batu Regency, North Sumatra Province, revealed that work stress has a negative but insignificant effect on teacher performance. This means that while increased stress can reduce performance, the impact in this study was weak. The findings indicated that physical symptoms of stress were the most significant indicators, followed by psychological symptoms.

The study highlighted those teachers faced considerable challenges due to the shift from offline to online teaching, which required them to manage and design effective online learning media. Despite these challenges, teachers were able to adapt, showing resilience and the ability to manage stress effectively.

The research concluded that although stress was present, it did not significantly hinder teacher performance. Factors such as teachers' educational backgrounds, experience, and the ability to manage stress played a role in mitigating its impact. The study emphasized the need for organizational support to help teachers cope with the physical and psychological symptoms of stress, ensuring their well-being and maintaining their performance during such challenging times.

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